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SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA NOTES (SEPTEMBER 22 - OCTOBER 5, 2007)

¶1. (U) Summary: The following Northern Uganda Notes provides information on the situation on the ground and USG activities aimed at meeting Mission's objectives in northern Uganda. These objectives include promoting regional stability through peace and security, good governance, access to social services, economic growth, and humanitarian assistance. Post appreciates feedback from consumers on the utility of this product and any gaps in information that need to be filled. End Summary.

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PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PROCESSES  
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¶2. (U) The Government of Uganda completed its consultations on accountability and reconciliation mechanisms in Kampala from September 26-27. The well-attended meetings involved legal experts, police, academics, media, the Amnesty Commission, Uganda Human Rights Commission, and parliamentarians. One member of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) participated. Four of the five African observers to the Juba Peace Talks also attended. Participants were divided into working groups on technical issues to discuss the enactment of legislation, timelines, capacity, compensation issues, management of expectations, how to ensure victim protection and participation, and the independence of investigations.

¶3. (SBU) The Government plans to release the findings of its consultations on October 8. Minister of Internal Affairs and chief Government negotiator, Ruhakana Rugunda summarized the consultations to date: Ugandans wanted peace first and foremost; Ugandans were ready to forgive, but need some accountability; Ugandans have a preference for traditional mechanisms of justice; and Ugandans see merit in formal justice for the worst crimes. Rugunda stated that Ugandans emphasized the importance of a Ugandan process that leads to closure and do not want a repeat of the Charles Taylor scenario.

¶4. (U) Although, positive steps have been made in the reconciliation process IDPs are skeptical about its success. Moreover, they contend that they have received poor education about the peace process and questioned the commitment of the parties involved. These findings were published on September 23 in an Oxfam sponsored report, "The Building Blocks of Sustainable Peace: The Views of Internally Displaced People in Northern Uganda." The survey was composed of 600 respondents and 91 focus group discussants from 11 IDP camps in the Acholi region. .

¶5. (SBU) Minister Rugunda announced that the areas in the north affected by the LRA will reach the same level of development as the rest of Uganda in three years. He stated that the government is placing its northern Uganda recovery program on the fast track.

Ruganda also, stated that the government will be allocating USD \$3.8 million for the rehabilitation of West Nile communities affected by the LRA.

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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY  
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¶16. (SBU) The districts of Gulu, Kitgum, Moroto, and Nakapiripirit have been blacklisted by the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) which aims to end poverty. Sam Sakwa, NUSAF director of programs stated that the districts failed to accurately account for the funds received. However, Sakwa noted that the rate of completion for NUSAF funded projects is almost 80 percent and that funds have been properly managed.

¶17. (SBU) On October 3, the New Vision newspaper reported that several members of Parliament (MPs) want the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) to be investigated by the Inspector General of Government. Their request is based on a recent report by the committee on foreign affairs which alleged that the funds have been misappropriated and used to fund ghost projects. For example, when the committee visited Kotido they found a ghost borehole called, "Um-um borehole drilling subproject." Although, the committee questions the steadfastness of NUSAF I they have suggested that NUSAF II be initiated in March 2008 upon the expiration of NUSAF I.

¶18. (U) On September 24th the Ministry of Health opened the Ogur Youth Information and Care Centre in Lira. The center received USD 117,000 to promote awareness about HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, and early pregnancy.

¶19. (U) President Yoweri Museveni will visit the flood ravaged region

KAMPALA 00001594 002 OF 002

of Teso on October 6 as part of a tour of northern Uganda. Museveni stated that the government of Uganda had earmarked USD 1.1 million for relief and rebuilding in the affected areas.

¶10. (SBU) USG Activities: In response to the floods in eastern Uganda, OFDA transferred USD 500,000 of International Disaster and Famine Assistance (IDFA) funds to the Mission. The funds were obligated as follows: USD 400,000 to the FAO for seeds, planting materials and tools and USD 100,000 to the Uganda Red Cross for plastic sheeting and water purification materials.

¶11. (U) USG Activities: CJTF-HOA has implemented several building projects in northern Uganda which include a library in Kitgum, a referral hospital pediatric ward, and several UG wells.

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IN THE MEDIA AND THE WEB  
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¶12. (U) PAS Kampala debriefed Sam Gummah, Director of the Uganda Radio Network (URN), who recently returned from several weeks conducting radio training in northern Uganda. The project was funded through a U.S. allocation to UNESCO. UNR conducted training programs for radio journalists and managers in Koboko (west Nile), Gulu, Kitgum and Moroto (Karamoja region) Districts. Radio is the major means of mass communication in northern Uganda. In Koboko, near the DRC and Sudan borders, URN staff trained radio station employees in news gathering and reporting skills, resulting in the first local news programming at the station. The reporters were charged with giving a voice to the community, who promptly began exposing (albeit minor) corruption amongst local officials. In Gulu, URN worked with "Radio King," a new station, to set up interview shows and do public interests programming. The work was effective-within days, the Resident District Coordinator, Walter Ochora, was calling for the station's closure while a competitor station had started a similar format. In Karamoja, where travel required a military escort, URN found conditions the most challenging, but still managed to get journalist-trainees into the field.

¶13. (U) UNR provided training-usually their first-ever training-to eighty-two station employees. The program resulted in station managers developing a greater appreciation for broadcasting local news, and making the station employees more conscious of their community.

¶14. (U) The East African newspaper reported on comments by LRA spokesman Godfrey Ayoo, who blamed delays in the peace talks on the Government of Uganda. Responding to recent comments by A/S Frazer, Ayoo said "It is unfortunate that the US is rallying regional governments to fight the LRA, when we are not involved in the ceasefire violations. We know the US has always branded us as terrorists. This attitude should change, with the US looking for a better way to assist in the talks." He added that should the US attack the LRA, it should be prepared to face the same humiliation experienced in 1992 in Somalia. "This would mean all our forces outside Uganda will go back to the country and repel the attackers. It will be the mother of all wars. We'll move our forces to Kampala and dislodge Museveni's dictatorship."

¶15. (U) Reflecting continued interest in the human dimensions of conflict and peace in the north, a team from "Glamour" magazine was in Gulu earlier in the week. The magazine is honoring a group of former child soldiers in Uganda, who have started "Empowering Hands," a peer support group that helps children get re-acclimated once they return to their villages. "Empowering Hands" is supported by UNICEF. The five women who started this group will be honored as "Women of the Year" at an event on November 5, 2007, at Lincoln Center in NYC.  
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